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AN

ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION,

OF THE

COLLEGE OF

PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS,

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE, NEW YORK,

AT THE

SPRING COMMENCEMENT, MARCH 14, 1861.

BY THOS. W. BLATCHFORD, A. M., M. D.

TROY, N. Y.:
PRINTED BY A. W. SCRIBNER & CO., CANNON PLACE.
1861.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THOS. W. BLATCHFORD, M. D.,

Sir:—In compliance with a resolution of the Alumni Association of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Medical Department of Columbia College, unanimously adopted at their Annual Meeting, held in the City of New York, on the 15th inst., I beg leave to request for publication, a copy of your address, delivered before the Alumni, on the occasion of their third anniversary.

I need hardly presume to think that you will refuse to comply with their request, when I consider, how imperfectly the limit of the allotted time, enabled you to give expression to your interesting discourse, the publication of which would preserve in an enduring form the characteristics of some whose names are associated with the early history of the College.

Accept, Dear Doctor, the assurance of my esteem, and believe me to be,

Yours Truly,

JOSEPH H. VEDDER, M. D., SEC'Y.

FLUSHING, near New York, March 20, 1861.

JOSEPH H. VEDDER, M. D., Sec'y, &c.,

Dear Sir:—Yours of the 20th is received. Having acknowledged myself the humble servant of the Alumni in consenting to prepare an address, when the request for its publication is conveyed in terms so flattering, I cannot refuse it. I herewith place a copy at your disposal.

Your friend,

THOS. W. BLATCHFORD.

TROY, 25th March, 1861.

70049

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Alternate—W. C. ROBERTS, M. D., ... *New York.*

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*Died April, 1861.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN ALUMNI:—

It gives me pleasure to greet you here this evening. Though a stranger to most of you, I feel my heart beating in unison with yours, while we are here contemplating the onward progress of this venerable Institution. She loses nothing in comparison with any in that galaxy of Medical Colleges which now dot the face of our widely extended country. Though not the collegiate pioneer in teaching Medical Science in this country, her predecessors were, very few. The high standard of Medical Education she at first assumed as essential in those who were to become the guardians of the public health, she never has lowered.

For one—and do I not speak the sentiments of all on whom she has conferred her honors? —for one I have always felt an honest pride in being able to say, I graduated at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York. During her incipient st honorable

existence, it is true she encountered many severe trials. There was not that concert of action and good feeling between the *teaching* and the *governing* powers which was desirable. How much more good she might have accomplished had there always existed the same amicable understanding between these two bodies as now, no one can tell. The *Medical Faculty* however never had but one end in view, they determined to keep their standard as high as public sentiment would sanction.

Long, long years have passed since he who addresses you sat as a humble learner here. Most of those, then his associates, have already passed away. The ranks of the teachers too, as well as of the taught, have been thinned out by that lynx-eyed executioner Death, and of those few of us who remain it will soon be said, we too are gone. This evening many beloved companions are missing with whom I here associated—Bliss, Rodgers, Wagner, DePuy, Ives, Helme, Beck, Scudder, Gunn, Sullivan. These shared with me the pleasant hours of pupilage, but they are not here now, they have been summoned hence. Their memories however are embalmed on many a heart beside my own. I cannot think of them on an occasion

like the present without childish emotion. Subsequent attachments may be strong, but the fibres of early friendships penetrate the center of the soul—the very bottom of the heart; and then early friends how few! when three score years are passed. Moore understood these chords of undying friendship when he wrote:

> "Long, long be my heart with such memories fill'd!
> Like the vase in which roses have once been distill'd—
> You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
> But the scent of the roses will hang 'round it still."

The subject I have selected for my theme on this interesting occasion is *Our Alma Mater in her Infancy.* I can speak of her incipient exertions with the more correctness, because I was then among the youthful witnesses interested in her welfare and, with my companions, as usual with young men, stood ready to contend earnestly for her rights. It is well known too, that early impressions of passing events generally retain their vividness with a tenacious grasp. As we advance in life, all later scenes may be obliterated from the memory, or remembered only with a mere glimmer of reality. The individuals, the building, and the surroundings, connected with her early history have with

me almost the freshness of scenes just passed. They are but as yesterday a little dimmed.

It is no part of my present purpose however to entertain you with a history of this College. You have already listened to that when my old friend and office associate Dr. Delafield addressed you so eloquently on the occasion of the opening of the new building in 1856. I regret that his address did not receive a more permanent and appropriate existence than that afforded by the pages of a periodical perpetuating but a portion of it. It deserved a place in the library of every graduate at least—and I hope that even yet the Doctor may be induced to place the Alumni, and the profession generally, under further obligations by re-printing it, enlarged and amended as his thorough acquaintance with the subject would enable him to do. The late changes entered into with Columbia College would almost seem to require it.

When, fifty years ago save one, I came to this city to study medicine, I was directed to the "New Institution," and there I attended my first course of medical lectures with Romeyne, and Seaman, and Cock, and Griscom, and Bruce, as instructors. The next year I matriculated

in this College. Before this, a building in Barclay Street had been procured, and rooms commodious enough for a beginning were fitted up for a class of about 70 students. There was at that time, certainly, nothing either attractive or imposing in the outward appearance of "our Alma Mater." Convenience and economy alone seemed to guide those whose duty it was to select the place, and arrange the few apartments needed. At that time the population of the city amounted to less than 90,000. Our country was every where depressed, and all her business interests prostrated. We were asserting our national rights and contending for them in a protracted war with England. Almost every avenue to prosperity seemed blocked up, but none more effectually than our commerce, and no other interest could so sensibly affect this city. The shipping for the most part, except coasters and river craft, lay moored and housed in the slips and silent ship-yards. It was a melancholy sight, "all faces turned into paleness" and "men's hearts failing them for fear." There was one spot, however, where the sunlight of enterprise seemed to shine, and that was on the *new Medical College in Barclay Street.*

The faculty, with that master spirit of energy, industry, and indomitable perseverance, Dr. David Hosack as an impelling power, at last surmounted every difficulty, and accomplished their grand design; and notwithstanding at times the prospect looked gloomy, and very many were ready to predict a failure, they listened to nothing but success. Revolutionary patriotism had then many a survivor. Their deeds of self-denial and of dauntless daring were fresh upon the memory, and often upon the tongue. These Medical Patriots did not intend to be outdone by their national predecessors. Onward and upward was their stirring motto, and it was a thousand times re-echoed by those possessing true hearts and active hands. Inasmuch as no good and great enterprise has ever proved successful without the blessing of Him on whom we are all dependent, as well in our individual as in our associated capacity, have we not reason to conclude that among the early friends of this noble enterprise there were those who sincerely implored that needed blessing. It must be so. Prayer is the breath of good men, and many such were, and always have been, among the friends of this College.

At length they had the satisfaction of finding their efforts so completely crowned with success that they were compelled to enlarge the boundaries of their habitation. The building was reconstructed, new rooms were added, improvements introduced and greater facilities afforded for a more extended course of medical training.

A full half century has rolled around, and where is our Alma Mater now? not in Barclay street, no, no. The merchant princes have obtained possession there. The hall of science is exchanged for the mart of merchandize. The library and dissecting room, for the ledger and the counting room, and the professors chairs are displaced by the tables of the money changers. How is this? What has brought about this mighty change? Some powerful controlling influence must have been set in motion to produce such a result. Let us examine and see what it is.

The desolating war, of which mention has been made, was succeeded by an honorable peace. Confidence between nations and individuals was restored, and once more prosperity floated on every breeze. The spirit of commerce like a mighty monarch began to speak only to be obeyed, and addressing, as it were,

the lower wards of the city, which soon became densely peopled, issued his mandates to all alike,—families, churches, literary institutions, all and each "give place and find other localities, commerce demands your room." Our Alma Mater with other institutions was at last compelled to obey and seek another resting place. She found it in Crosby street in 1830, but in 1856 she again yielded to the upward current, and established herself in Twenty-fourth street.

The spot where the noble structure now rears its walls was, but a short time since, a verdant meadow. The city itself, instead of numbering her inhabitants only by thousands, counts them now by hundreds of thousands. Instead of the College of Physicians and Surgeons being the only Medical College in the State, she is but one of many, and might perhaps claim to be the mother of them all. Instead of a solitary Hospital half constructed, and one Alms House, and one Dispensary, we can count these noble institutions, these schools of practical medicine, by the score.* Every thing how changed!

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* *From a late number of the "World."*

MEDICAL CHARITIES IN NEW YORK.—No City in the world is more munificent in its medical charities than New York, and this winter, all their capacities are tested to the utmost. There are three principal classes of these charities—

How unlike our Alma Mater when she commenced her career of usefulness and honor!

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the dispensaries, cliniques, and hospitals. The clinique in New York is a somewhat different affair from what it is in Paris: there it applies only to hospital practice before the medical students; but in New York, the clinique is simply a sort of improvised hospital, or rather consultation room, in the amphitheatres of the medical colleges, where the professors furnish gratuitous medical advice and treatment to any one suffering from any of the twenty-five hundred maladies which flesh is heir to, who are not ill enough to be admitted to the hospital, and too poor to employ a physician. Here the most renowned physicians and surgeons in the City, daily give their services freely to the poor, and often perform even the most formidable operations. Over ten thousand persons thus received relief during the past year in the three great schools of the Metropolis.

At the five City *Dispensaries*, medical and surgical service was afforded gratuitously last year to 135,235 persons—to whom 251,593 prescriptions (including the medicine) were also freely furnished. And, besides these, the homœopathic and other dispensaries have afforded relief to thousands. The *Hospitals* annually furnish relief to over fifty thousand persons suffering under every form and combination of disease, and, at the present time, they are nearly all unusually crowded. Bellevue, the largest charity hospital in the world, has over a thousand patients within its walls; indeed, so full is it, that the most pressing necessity exists for the speedy completion of the new charity hospital on Blackwell's Island. This, we understand, will be open in about a month, and will furnish much needed additional accommodations.

The admirable classification of these hospitals also adds infinitely to their value, both to the patient and the medical student, as diseases of every kind can thus be treated and studied inexhaustibly. Thus, Blackwell's Island Hospital constantly furnishes to the student about two hundred patients, of both sexes, suffering under every form of syphillis; the State Emigrant's Hospital, about seven hundred cases of accouchement annually; Randall's Island and the Child's Hospital exhibit the various infantile diseases; in the Ophthalmic Hospital, and the Eye Infirmary, over four thousand persons are treated annually, for diseases of the visual organs; while the surgical cases at the Broadway Hospital, the chronic

How unlike herself and her surroundings when she first announced her independent existence!

To whom are we indebted for what she was, and for what she now is? In memory let us revisit the old lecture rooms, and see who occupied the professorial chairs, who toiled, and planned, and labored, and executed, at that early day. We may be able thus to ascertain, at least in part, to whom we are this day indebted for this noble enterprise—to whom we, and generations yet to come, owe a debt of gratitude never to be paid, only because it never can be cancelled.

In this revisit to our old preceptors, to describe their appearance, how they performed their parts, and whether they gave promise of being

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cases at Bellevue, and the European diseases at Ward's Island, literally cover the whole field of pathology.

And yet, notwithstanding all this immense machinery for the relief of suffering, instead of a surplus of gratuitous medical relief, there are still large arrears of available charitable efforts in this very direction, not yet turned to account. Hundreds annually die without any medical treatment whatever, whose lives might be saved thereby. There can be no more beneficent mode of alleviating human suffering than by contributing to the support of these hospitals.

One of the good things done by the Commissioners of Charities and Corrections, was to throw open freely to medical students, Bellevue and the other institutions under their charge. The fee system is now entirely abolished, and the large numbers who flock to Bellevue on Wednesdays and Saturdays (operating days), show that the privilege thus accorded, is fully appreciated by the medical students of New York.

equal to the task they had undertaken, we must not forget to render a due meed of praise to their successors in office. Had they not been worthy recipients of the mantles of their predecessors, we should not be here assembled on this joyous occasion.

My Diploma bears the sign manual of nine worthy names. With your permission I will refer to each in the order there assumed, with no other expectation than that of making a rough sketch of their *lecture room characters* as, almost half a century since, they appeared to one of their grateful pupils. My attempt will be made without any pretension to artistic merit:—

Samuel Bard, M. D., L. L. D., the first President of the College, was a gentleman literally of the Old School. He was highly respected, —almost venerated—by a large circle of influential friends. Very advanced in years—short of stature, and thin in person, stooping considerably as he walked. He had a small head, large mouth, bright eye, very dark complexion, and his features were much wrinkled by age. His appearance was by no means prepossessing, and his *delivery* any thing but pleasing, except when arrayed in cocked-hat and flowing robe, in dignified Latin he delivered parchments to

waiting aspirants. I heard him deliver two or three addresses to graduating classes, and, notwithstanding the absence of oratorical embellishments, they were listened to by a popular assembly with profound attention. Dr. Bard's professional attainments, moral worth, and social position were of the first order. His philanthropy was proverbial.

A circumstance occurred at the distribution of diplomas, I think in 1814, which was the cause of momentary merriment in the whole assembly. A colored servant always waited upon the Doctor in his official visits to the College as his valet, bearing his insignia of office —the black silk gown and the cocked hat. Charley had on several occasions witnessed the imposing ceremony of conferring degrees, and had often assisted his venerable master in robing himself to discharge his high official duties. The Doctor always took off his hat as he commenced the Latin phrase, "*Ex auctoritate Universitatis Reipublicæ Novi Eboraci,*" Charley always supposed the Latin used was merely the name of the cocked-hat. It so happened on this occasion that the hat was missing, and could no where be found. The time for the ceremony had arrived, and the Doctor, unable

longer to wait, commenced "*ex auctoritate Universitatis, &c.*," when the ever faithful servant, jealous of his master's honor, having by diligent search found the missing article, approached his master in almost breathless haste, unconscious of the august assembly present, exclaiming, "Massa! Massa! here is your *exotoritaffy*."

BENJAMIN DEWITT, M. D., adjunct professor of Natural Philosophy, was a fine looking gentleman, of a tall, portly, commanding figure, open countenance, affable manners, pleasing address, and very ready delivery; a popular lecturer, and a great favorite with the students; especially with those who took an interest in Natural Philosophy. Dr. DeWitt was an early and a warm friend of the College. His social position added to his personal influence, and his scientific acquirements, made him an important member of the Faculty, while he was Vice President of the College. Being the brother of the then Surveyor General, and himself possessing at Albany more than an ordinary share of political influence, he was of great service in procuring the necessary legal enactments required by the College. Dr. DeWitt was noted for giving handsome entertainments.

In 1819, the last year of his official life, as Health Officer of the port, he gave one of the most magnificent entertainments at his residence on Staten Island, which had ever been given there, or even in the State itself. Inside the mansion not only, but upon the surrounding grounds, preparations for it were observed long in advance, and when at length the evening came, Nature itself seemed propitious to the splendor of the scene—calm, cool, cloudless, the very pride of June with her balmy, fragrant atmosphere. Taste and refinement were visible on every side. Tables were loaded with every delicacy to tempt the appetite and exhilarate the spirits of the invited throng, while music, in delightful profusion, lent her charms to heighten enjoyment.

By a happy coincidence, the nuptials of a daughter of his near neighbor, the Vice President of the United States, occurred on the same delightful evening, and this circumstance brought to each of these splendid social gatherings—these fetes champetres—many of the elite of the City and the State, including the dignitaries of the Bench, and the distinguished of the Bar and the Pulpit, together with many of the brotherhood of the healing art. There, too, were

many members of the National, State, and City Governments, together with several honored foreign Officials. The magnificence of the scene almost bewildered those who witnessed it.

But Providence—inscrutable to man—was preparing a terrible contrast to this gorgeous spectacle. The Yellow Fever suddenly made its appearance. Its fatal results, multiplying in rapid succession, produced universal consternation and dread, crushing out natural affection itself. Soon, before the mansion of the Health Officer, stood the hearse, the coffin, and the pall; for after an illness less than ephemeral, the noble manly form of him, who but so recently had made multitudes happy, was now dressed for the grave. The gay and joyous crowd had all retired. No music was now heard, but, in its place, the wail of distress. Four faithful boatmen, and twelve courageous physicians, with the youthful son of the departed, constituted the funeral train. No minister of religion was there to improve the occasion, or comfort the mourner; but a still, small voice, far more impressive than man's, read a salutary lesson on the world's vanity, and man's frailty.

"Sic transit gloria mundi."

David Hosack, M. D., L. L. D., Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine, and Lecturer on Obstetrics and the Diseases of Women and Children, seemed the master spirit of the College. In personal appearance, Dr. Hosack was but little above the ordinary size, a little inclined to corpulency;--quick motion, dark complexion, a piercing black eye, black hair, and very heavy black eye brows capable of assuming a withering frown;—a loud, clear, sonorous voice, with a very distinct articulation, his delivery was emphatic, and at times truly eloquent. The impression conveyed to his hearers was, that no assertion he made was to be doubted, no opinion he advanced could be controverted. He always seemed thoroughly to understand his subject, and appeared familiar with the whole range of Medical Science. He was extremely sarcastic toward any opposing his theories. He was a good linguist and a ripe scholar; was very fond of making Greek and Latin quotations from ancient Medical Authors.—Sometimes he gave the translation, but not always, remarking, "Gentlemen, I will not offend you by translating it. I take it for granted you all understand the languages, at least, if you do not, you ought to."

Himself a graduate of the Edinburgh School, when that was the model Medical School of the world, Dr. Hosack was desirous of placing the College of Physicians and Surgeons on an equally exalted footing, especially as to preliminary education in her matriculants. He was a strenuous advocate for at least an elementary knowledge of Latin and Greek before commencing the study of Medicine. In point of energy, perseverance, and industry, few were his equals, and none his superior. In his intercourse with the Students he could be pleasant and affable and even jocose, and, when he chose, imperious, overbearing, and repulsive in the extreme. He was a favorite with those students who embraced his peculiar views; and most did, for all of us looked upon Dr. Hosack as final authority in medical matters—a judge from whose decision appeal was hopeless. He was more in the habit of interspersing his lectures with anecdote than any of the faculty, many of these anecdotes seemed entirely impromptu, but others appeared familiar by repetition. He was not always particular as to the character of the anecdote. If it illustrated the subject, he did not suppress it from any want of delicacy associated with it. Indeed, we used to think

he selected such from principle, thinking they would make the deeper impression. The Doctor was very fond of a double entendre, and employed it even when its propriety was a little doubtful. Tardy attendance and listless hearers he could not endure; and he had different ways of correcting such irregularities. His most common method was, to make an abrupt pause in his lecture, fasten his large black eyes, with that thunder-cloud frown gathered on his brow, upon the poor recusant, and keep them there until he found his seat, when the Doctor resumed his lecture. He was a thorough disciplinarian and always maintained the strictest order in the class. Instantly fixing his withering look in the direction of any disturbance, almost as quickly suppressed it. Few who suffered reproof exposed themselves to it a second time. The punishment was terrible, and yet all loved him, and none more than those whom he reproved. He was very punctual in his appointments, beginning precisely at the hour. It was extremely rare that he ever failed to lecture, and he seldom kept the class waiting a moment. This was the more remarkable, considering his extensive professional engagements.

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Dr. Hosack was an excellent Botanist, and he occasionally treated his class to a short lecture on Botany, although it trenched upon the province of his colleague Dr. Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell's class was small, and he became quite sensitive from reports which reached him, of what he considered Dr. Hosack's interference, and determined to see for himself. Accordingly during one of those botanical digressions, who should enter the lecture room, stately and slow, but the Professor of Botany himself. This was a visitor equally unexpected and unwelcome. It was the first, and I believe the only time I ever saw Dr. Hosack non-plused. His confusion, however, was but momentary. Self-possession quickly rallied. As Dr. Mitchell entered the room, he bowed most gracefully to the chair. Dr. Hosack arose, and, after a momentary hesitation delivered, himself something to this wise: "Good morning, Dr. Mitchell I am very happy to see you—I was just impressing upon my class the importance of attending to Botany, and recommending them, by all means, to pay special attention to your lectures, assuring them that they would be amply repaid, and, although it is not in my [illegible] to the [illegible] the subject which

you can, I thought I would give them some little idea of the importance a knowledge of Botany would be to them in after life." Both professors took seats, but the lecture was soon concluded.

WILLIAM J. MCNEVIN, M. D., Professor of Chemistry and Materia Medica, was a gentleman rather below the ordinary size, very good looking, of quick movement, a sharp, piercing eye, and a very intelligent countenance. His voice was not full, but his enunciation was clear and distinct, and his delivery rapid, not at all injured by a slight lisp and foreign accent. His language was refined and scholarly, having frequent reference to classic literature, with familiar illustrations drawn from common life, and occasionally interlarded by anecdote. Dr. McNevin was a good chemist, but not a skillful manipulator. His disposition was impulsive and hasty. He was easily irritated. He was no disciplinarian. He did not seem to have the faculty of controlling young men. Whispering and inattention in the class annoyed him much, which he occasionally rebuked with sharpness, and that generally made the matter worse. At times he was playful and pleasant, but not very often. He was not the popular

lecturer Griscom was, although he was a much more learned man. His advantages had been far greater. He was a graduate, I believe, of the Dublin University. He endeavored to adapt his lectures to Medical Science, by showing the intimate relation between chemistry and the daily routine of practical medicine. He loved conviviality and good cheer, and was the life of the social circle. He had hosts of friends.*

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*An old classmate, residing in Louisville, Kentucky, has, at my request, furnished the following reminiscence of Dr. McNevin: "My recollections of our old friend, McNevin, are very pleasant. It may truly be said of him he was '*a good fellow*,' as well as a thorough scholar. His solid learning was well seasoned with 'Attic Salt.' He occasionally, you remember, embellished his lectures with humorous anecdotes in illustration of his subjects. In his lecture on *Nitrate of Silver*, the use of which, as an ingredient in the hair dyes now so popular, was, at that time, but little known. He stated that an old batchelor, whose head was whitened by the frosts of fifty winters or more, called upon him, saying, 'I have been told you are a Chemist and can color hair. I have concluded it is time for me to think of matrimony, and I have called to see whether you can restore my hair to its original black color, so as to rejuvenate me, as I intend to offer myself to a *young lady*.' O, yes. What will you charge? Ten Dollars. Very well, do it. The thing was done, the money paid, and the gallant lover departed rejoicing. In due time, and while his suit was still in abeyance, his hair, as it grew out, became, of course, of a sheep-gray. He again called on the Doctor, but now he rebelled at the charge. The Doctor stood firm, but at last told him it was a solution of *Nitrate of Silver*, and he might get it from any druggist, and color his hair himself. The druggist made a mistake and gave him a solution of *Nitrate of Quicksilver*. On applying it to his hair, he found it changed it to a yellow. In this predicament he

SAMUEL L. MITCHELL, M. D., L. L. D., &c., &c., Professor of Botany and Natural History, &c., was a portly gentleman, erect and stately in his gait, walking very deliberately. No matter who else was in a hurry, Dr. Mitchell never

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returned to the Doctor in a rage, accusing the Doctor of evil intentions. An explanation, however, satisfied him that the mistake was in the druggist. He now imploringly besought the Doctor's aid. 'Can you change it back again?' Oh, yes. 'What will it cost?' Twenty dollars—ten for taking out the yellow, and ten for dyeing it black. The money was paid, the change effected, and the poor fellow once more departed in peace. In his lecture on *Nitrous Oxyd Gas*, a very ludicrous occurrence took place. The gas had all been prepared; the rationale of the process described, and a graphic description given of the effects produced upon those who inhale it, varying according to the temperament of the individual, giving expression to every variety of emotion. When about to administer it to those of the class who were inclined to take it—and many did—his assistant informed him, in a low voice, that, through an accident, the gas had all escaped. In this emergency, the Doctor's acumen and versatility at once suggested a way to turn even this unfortunate mishap to good account. The gasometer was immediately filled with atmospheric air, and upon transferring it to the gas-bag, for inhalation, he directed all the young gentlemen who should inhale the gas, to write out, in detail, their sensations and emotions while under its influence, and hand in their reports to him next morning duly subscribed.

At the next lecture, he read these reports before the class announcing the names of the respective writers. They were quite characteristic of the usual effects of Nitrous Oxyd on different temperaments. At the conclusion, he stated the fact of the escape of the gas, and the substitution of atmospheric air, and consequently that all the glowing and vivid descriptions of the young gentlemen were purely imaginary. This denouement was followed by the most uproarious demonstrations of the class, to the great mortification of the gentlemen who were the dupes of the experiment." A. D. S.

was. His manners were remarkably easy. He felt perfectly at home and at his ease in any circle, and under all circumstances, except, perhaps, when he had reason to apprehend personal danger from pestilential effluvia; for he was a rational contagionist, and was unwilling to encounter such an enemy. He had small, light eyes, a large head, an aquiline nose somewhat prominent. In walking, his head was thrown a little back, and his chin quite elevated, and with his rolling collar, and deeply, ruffled shirt, his appearance was such as to attract universal attention.

Dr. Mitchell was literally a walking library. He was never known to be at a loss for an answer to any question, especially in natural history. He seemed perfectly familiar with every branch of Science, and was exceedingly communicative and companionable. It was often said his memory was so retentive, that he never forgot what he had once read. He was vain to a fault, and apparently proud of his attainments. Only flatter his vanity, and no favor, in his power to grant, would be denied.

Besides his scientific acquirements, he was a politician, representing this District in Congress. He often addressed public assemblies on politi-

cal subjects. He seemed at home on almos any occasion, and apparently required but little time for preparation, and this, whether in the halls of Science or on the floor of Congress, whether eulogizing departed greatness or haranguing political gatherings. He was listened to with attention, and yet he was not a pleasing speaker. His delivery was slow, and at times hesitating. His voice was quite feminine, but his articulation distinct; his language was correct, and occasionally eloquent. Notwithstanding these few defects, Dr. Mitchell held a deservedly high rank as a lecturer. He was full of anecdote and always in fine spirits, and on public occasions, this was one great attraction. He never suffered his audience to sleep or become weary; they always expected something lively, and they were seldom disappointed. He was fond of society, parade, and display, and yet he was a man of great influence in the world of letters, abroad as well as at home. Few Americans were honored with more titles of distinction than Dr. Mitchell, and very few appreciated them higher. All who knew him will remember the pride he took in displaying the ring he received from the Emperor Alexander, of Russia, as expressive of the

respect that distinguished sovereign entertained for him.

He occasionally gave handsome entertainments, at his residence, to his medical friends and others, to which some of the more advanced students were occasionally invited.

At one of these entertainments, a group of gentlemen gathered around him, all anxious to draw out the rich treasures of his well stored mind. At first, it came only in responses to isolated questions, but as he saw his guests become more and more interested, he let it gush in torrents. He spoke of his multifarious engagements, professional, political, and scientific,--of his course in Congress,—of the War then in progress (1814,) and several other subjects. Some one expressed astonishment at his ability to give attention to so many pursuits, and of such varied character. "Ah," said he, "there is no difficulty if you only have *order* and *method* in your business. Only see that you have a place for every thing, and then keep every thing in its appropriate place. Why, gentlemen, the falciform process of the dura mater that separates the two hemispheres of the brain, was designed expressly for this very purpose, so that we may appropriate one to

Science, and the other to—to—to politics if you please."

In Barclay Street, as the older graduates will remember, the cabinet of Natural History occupied three sides of the lecture room. Once, during the lecture of Dr. Hosack, Dr. Mitchell had occasion to go to the cabinet for some specimen he needed to illustrate his own lecture. His presence, of course, diverted the attention of the class, although he endeavored to accomplish his errand as quietly as possible. Dr. Hosack stopped short, and addressing Dr. Mitchell, in a loud voice, said, "Dr. Mitchell, I am engaged." Dr. Mitchell, bowing gracefully to the chair, replied, very deliberately, "So am I, sir." Dr. Hosack immediately dismissed his class, saying he felt himself insulted.

Wright Post, M. D., Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, was a character entirely different from any I have yet referred to. He was tall, thin, pale, of feeble aspect, of a very measured step, and cautious movement. His features were small throughout, eyes,—nose, mouth and head, but the combined expression was very commanding, calm, pleasant, affable, inspiring, at once, veneration and confidence. On entering the lecture room, no matter how much

noise and bustle had filled the room, all was instantly hushed, almost to stillness of death. After taking his position before the "Subject" he always took out his Agate Snuff-box, which he received from a distinguished source as a token of professional regard, and slowly and gracefully tapping it with his forefinger, opened it and took a generous pinch, which he seemed greatly to enjoy, and after carefully wiping away the ample wastage, he found himself about ready for his routine duties. During these preliminary movements, he usually surveyed the part of the "Subject" which his demonstrator had prepared, and then, without the semblance of ostentation or display, he began his lecture. Commencing in a low voice, with slow delivery, it required the utmost silence for him to be heard. The most undivided attention, however, was cheerfully given, so much did the class respect him, and so unwilling were they to lose a single syllable of his lecture. It was usually several minutes before his utterance became free and easy. His voice, however, gradually rose until he was able to fill the room tolerably well, but never so well that it did not require, in the audience, at all times, more than an ordinary

degree of attention to hear all he said. He was a man of very few words, and in his lectures, which were delivered without any notes before him, there never seemed anything redundant nor anything lacking. He never repeated what he had once uttered, there was no need of it, the impression was perfect where the attention had been given. It was his uniform custom, at the commencement of the course, to relate the story of the "Doctor's Mob," in which he and his associates once came near losing their lives at the hands of an infuriated rabble, excited by the heartless impudence of a student holding a half dissected limb out of the hospital window, and showing it to some boys below, telling them it was the leg or the arm of their mother. He always accompanied this story with words of caution, putting students on their guard not unnecessarily to excite the public mind, always too sensitive on such subjects.

Of all the lecturers to whom it has been my privilege to listen, whether in this country or abroad, none has left impressions of respect and veneration so profound as those produced by this delightful man—this model lecturer. Dr. Post, rarely, if ever, employed anecdote for illustration. He never seemed to need such

help. His language was always chaste and in good keeping. The most fastidious could take no offence, and yet every thing was clearly and thoroughly explained.*

WILLIAM HAMMERSLY, M. D., Professor of Clinical Medicine, was, in point of size, much the same as Dr. Hosack, but unlike Dr. Hosack, his movements were slow and measured. He stooped a little as he walked, keeping his eyes, for the most part, on the

*A fellow-student of Dr. Post's, and still an honored and an active laborer in the field of medicine, says, in a recent letter to me:—

"I think it was in April, 1819, that this incident occurred. Mrs. D. has been an old patient of Dr. Post's; her only son had studied medicine with him, and was highly prized by him, and the only remaining child, a young lady aged 17 years, had died the November previous. The mother was utterly prostrated by her affliction, and a diminished income induced her to leave her old home, where her children were born. She requested me to mention to the Doctor that she wished to settle his bill for medical services, saying that no money could ever repay him for his kindness and attention to her family; she wished to settle the bill before she left the old home. I mentioned it to the Doctor, once or twice, at her request. I will never forget with what earnestness he said Mrs. D. is a devoted christian, an example to christian mothers, nothing but the *grace of God* could have sustained her under her heavy afflictions. I sincerely sympathize with her. I will make out her bill immediately, will you have the goodness to deliver it to her? That evening I called upon the old lady and presented a sealed letter to her, which she opened in my presence, saying it was just like Dr. Wright Post, and showed me the contents:—the bill for medical services amounting to $150, receipted in full, and a check, payable to her order, for $200.

Yours sincerely, B. O."

[illegible] profound meditation. He [illegible] always appeared to [illegible] there was still time [illegible] punctual to his engage- [illegible] showed him to be a [illegible] and literally of the [illegible] of Edinburgh, he held [illegible] in high estimation—the [illegible] tactics. Cullen was [illegible] was a scholar and a lin- [illegible] could converse as freely [illegible] Dr. Hammersly never [illegible] in his intercourse with [illegible] dignified to a degree which [illegible] influence. He never in- [illegible] remarks, but always car- [illegible] face, and seldom failed to [illegible] when he saw levity, [illegible] in others, and still [illegible] was of a gloomy turn [illegible] and weighty matters [illegible] engage his attention.

[illegible] the sick, he was a model [illegible] patient, tender, cheer- [illegible] of the case it was his [illegible] was thorough and dis- [illegible] careful to pay a strict

Dr. Hamanese

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when he embraced an opinion, adhered to it with great tenacity. The use of Digitalis in Phthisis had been introduced from England under very favorable circumstances, its employment being advocated by high authority. Dr. Hammersly was among the first in this city to introduce it as a substitute for bleeding in pulmonary inflammation. He made free use of it long after most other Physicians had abandoned it, except as an auxiliary to other curative means. One day, as the class was following him in his rounds, he came to a patient whom he at first did not recognize. He requested the House Physician to inform him of the case. "Phthisis, Sir," was the reply. "What is he taking, sir?" said the Doctor. "Digitalis, sir." The Doctor then seemed suddenly to recollect himself and addressed the class much after this manner: "Oh, yes, I remember now. How greatly he has improved! Why, my man, how much better you are! Gentlemen, you here see the astonishing effect of digitalis. I wish you to take special notice of this case. A week or two since, when we put this patient on the use of digitalis, he was in a very low condition. His pulse, if you remember, was considerably above a hundred, and every thing

looked very unpromising." At this stage of the lecture, the Doctor noticed a winking and smiling in the class, and turning to the House Physician, he said, sharply, "What does this mean, sir!" when he replied, "This is not the patient, sir, to which you have reference. He died three days ago, this is another." The lecture here ended, and the class dispersed.

Two other gentlemen signed my diploma. They filled respectively the chairs of Surgery and Materia Medica, but as one of them is still living, and the other so very recently deceased, delicacy forbids my delineating their characters. I can only permit myself to say that when, nearly a half century since, they entered upon their professorial career, the expectations they then excited have been more than realized. In no respect have they been inferior to their illustrious associates. The name of VALENTINE MOTT will for all time be connected with American Surgery, and that of JOHN W. FRANCIS with American Medical Literature.

Besides the gentlemen who constituted the faculty in 1816 and '17, there were three others who had previously filled important chairs, and whose lectures I attended.

JOHN AUGUSTINE SMITH, M. D., adjunct Professor with Dr. Post, was a man of very vigorous intellect, extensive acquirements, and great energy of character. He was a splendid lecturer, a great logician, a close reasoner, an independent thinker, and a ripe scholar. His connection with the College terminated by his accepting a call to the Presidency of William and Mary College, in Virginia.

JOHN C. OSBORN, M. D., Professor of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children, was a gentleman of fine literary taste. He was called to the chair of Obstetrics from Newbern, in North Carolina, where he enjoyed an enviable reputation, and a very lucrative practice. His lectures were written with great care, and some of them were perfectly elegant. Still he failed to interest his class as much as it was expected he would from the character he brought with him. He was very irregular in his attendance in the lecture room, frequently coming late, and occasionally failing to appear at all. This was attributed mainly to the nature and extent of his professional engagements, for Dr. Osborn very soon took rank among his compeers as a practitioner second to none.

In the delivery of his lectures, he was closely confined to his notes, seldom raising his head to look at his audience, noise and inattention never seemed to disturb him. He read his lecture in a low, monotonous voice, more like a bashful school boy repeating his task, than a learned lecturer instructing others. His countenance was expressive of thought rather than of action; his person, anything but commanding. He was of middling size and quick step, but his health seemed feeble. His inveterate habit of taking snuff greatly injured his naturally low voice. His ample snuff-box was always open before him, and but very few minutes ever passed without his having recourse to it; neither was he at all particular to brush away the unsnuffed portion of the generous pinch, paying but little attention to personal appearance. Dr. Osborn was considered a close student of nature and of books. He possessed a remarkably retentive memory, and could recite poetry by the hour. He died in 1818 in the West Indies.

James S. Stringham, M. D., Professor of Forensic Medicine, was a highly educated gentleman, possessing talents and acquirements well adapted to the position assigned him. If

my impressions are correct, Dr. Stringham was the first, in this country, to teach Medical Jurisprudence as a distinct branch of Medical Education. He made his lectures exceedingly interesting. They were attended by others than Medical Students, Legal gentlemen, and young men contemplating the study of Law, and some divinity students, were among his constant hearers. He possessed the *esprit du corps* to a great degree; and this, together with his clear, terse style, and easy address, made his lectures very acceptable to a popular audience. His health, however, was feeble, and he spoke in a low, but very distinct, tone of voice. He had a mild, pleasant countenance; intelligent, bright eye; pale features. He was kind and affable in his manners, and very friendly with the students generally. None could know him without feeling an attachment to him, and a sincere respect for his talents. Though not very small, he was below the ordinary standard in height. His career, however, was short. He died of consumption, at an early age, in the West Indies, whither he had repaired for his health.

Students have, from time immemorial, exercised the privilege of canvassing the characters

of their teachers. The opportunities of observation being abundant, and the restraints to libery of expression but few, the lecture room sketches thus drawn, though perhaps not always strictly correct, are, for the most part, acknowledged to be striking likenesses. I have thus attempted to portray the lecture room characters of those who laid the foundation of the institution whose fifty-fourth anniversary we this evening celebrate,—men of gigantic powers all, though all of different and dissimilar temperaments—no two alike, and some the antipodes of others, and yet all bent on one great and glorious end, that of establishing, in this city, an institution where sound, enlightened. medical science should be taught. Fixing the standard high at the commencement, and raising it higher and higher as the advancement of science demanded, they determined always and ever that no similar institution should out-strip it in the appliances afforded for that which the civilized world demands—a THOROUGH MEDICAL EDUCATION.

Let it not be forgotten, however, that whatever facilities for medical education any institution may possess, there is something behind all that, namely, a pre-professional training,

which is essential to make our noble profession what it should be. Could a classical education or a polytechnic training, or even both, be insisted on in all our Medical Colleges before matriculation should be allowed, medical graduates might then claim a standing, in the world of letters at least, equal to that of graduates in Divinity or Law.

How well the founders of our Alma Mater have succeeded in that which they undertook, let the multitudes tell who have been benefited by those she has graduated, scattered as they are and have been in every part of the world. Her diploma is every where respected, and it always will be, while she insists on her present requirements, and refuses to lower them one jot or tittle. Let those who want cheap lectures and easy graduation trials knock at other doors, when such apply for admission here let them read (if read they can) over the doorway this sentence, engraved in indelible letters of living light, SUPERFICIALS NOT GRADUATED HERE.

Young Gentlemen of the graduating class:—You have just completed your medical pupilage, and are about to commence the *Study of Practice*, for practice properly pursued is a serious study still. Allow me, my young

friends to tender to you the congratulations of your brethren, and cordially welcome you to our ranks. After a laborious preparation you have been adjudged worthy to receive the honors of our Alma Mater. The Degree just conferred upon you entitles you to an honorable standing in the great Medical Brotherhood. That Brotherhood in its national associated capacity has given to a continent a CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS. The continent applauds and accepts the boon, and each and every honorable medical association in the land has adopted it as its rule of action. Its basis is the *Bible Golden Rule* of doing to others as you would that others should do to you. In addition to the most excellent advice you have already received, permit me to recommend to you the *study* of this code, (I would that it were printed on the back of every Diploma,) *Study it carefully*, and in all your professional duties, *practice it faithfully*, and I will guarantee that everywhere, and always, you will be welcomed by the warm sympathies and generous hearts of your medical brethren.

You are commencing your professional voyage furnished with honorable credentials and clean bills of lading, and we hope never to

hear that you are sailing under false colors—nay, we shall be unwilling to believe that *you* can thus dishonor your Alma Mater, or thus disgrace your brotherhood and yourselves.

Friends and Associates, thanking you for the honor conferred by selecting me to address you on this occasion—and still more for the patience you have manifested in listening to me so long, I bid you all an affectionate farewell.

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